



December 17, 2002

Dear Citizens:

Looking back, 2002 has been marked by several challenges. We have lived with an economy that was not as strong as it has been in recent years. Ethical lapses have raised credibility questions at certain businesses and governments. And, of course, the tragic events of September 11, 2001, continue to have a profound impact on our great nation.

Looking forward, meeting challenges calls for strong leadership, and I assure you that Waukesha County will lead the way. We will act in a manner that does not violate the trust we have received from taxpayers. This year's budget theme "Performance with Integrity", addresses our challenges and reflects our pledge to the taxpayers to work in a fiscally responsible manner.

The 2003 budget represents Waukesha County's commitment to trust and to our values. We continue to invest in our seniors, our youth, public safety, transportation, technology, parks and open space. In doing so we made necessary decisions to balance our needs with the desire for limited, responsible government.

I am proud to state that this budget addresses our priorities and also reduces the county property tax rate for the 13<sup>th</sup> year in a row. As proposed, the county property tax rate will drop to \$2.31 per \$1,000 in equalized value. This is the third lowest tax rate among the 72 Wisconsin counties and the lowest rate of those counties that do not impose a sales tax. The financial community and bond rating agencies have again recognized our fiscal responsibility and stability by awarding the County their highest bond rating of triple A.

In addition, we have made hard choices to hold the line on spending. Among these choices are the phase out or elimination of some non-mandated human service programs which are not core services and elimination of inefficient mass transit routes.

Perhaps our greatest challenge is to change the way services are delivered so tax savings can be gained without affecting performance. Taxpayers are demanding that governments work together to eliminate duplicative services whenever possible. As the world around us evolves and changes, governments must adapt and evolve.

To this end, this budget includes the creation of a consolidated dispatch operation to provide combined dispatch and call taking services for police, fire, emergency medical, and public works operations that will deliver this important public safety service in a more efficient and cost effective manner. Independent studies have concluded that this center could save county taxpayers \$2.7 million each year while providing a consistent, high quality public safety service that is as good or better that citizens receive today.

Several other priority initiatives highlight the 2003 budget. They include:

- ❖ Creation of a Criminal Justice Coordinating Taskforce to recommend and implement comprehensive changes aimed at controlling jail inmate population growth.
- ❖ Construction of the Justice Facility expansion will begin in 2003. Phase One of this expansion is planned for completion in 2005.
- ❖ Retzer Nature Center expansion will be constructed in 2003. When finished, this facility will have enhanced meeting, program, and presentation rooms. The expansion will also include partnering with the Waukesha School District to relocate its planetarium providing a comprehensive nature learning experience.
- ❖ County highway expansions at National Avenue (CTH ES) in Mukwonago; Janesville Road (CTH L) in Muskego; and Pewaukee Road (CTH J) in the City of Pewaukee.
- ❖ County recycling rebate distributions totaling \$650,000, which will be shared with municipalities participate in the County's recycling program.
- ❖ Legacy Parkland Acquisition program which continues at \$1 million funding to purchase unique natural areas identified in the Waukesha County Park, Open Space and Greenway plans.

The 2003 Waukesha County budget provides for our citizens today and prepares us for the challenges of the future. We address the everyday basics of health, welfare, and public safety needs of our citizens. We also invest in the future by addressing our transportation infrastructure, parks and open space, and the needs of our seniors and youth.

Significant work has gone into the preparation of this prudent 2003 Waukesha County budget. I would like to acknowledge the dedicated efforts of County staff in crafting this budget and the Waukesha County Board of Supervisors who reviewed and adopted the budget that follows. You can be assured that together we have built a sound budget that will serve our County well today and in the future. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Daniel M. Finley  
County Executive